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## 3,000 rally in S.J.

### DEMONSTRATORS OPPOSE U.S.-LED STRIKE ON IRAQ

By Lisa M. Krieger and Ken McLaughlin  
Mercury News

Awakened and alarmed by America preparing for war, thousands of chanting demonstrators gathered in San Jose and Santa Cruz on Saturday, joining an increasingly visible movement against a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

"We are joined in solidarity with millions of people around the globe right now," said Raj Jayadev, 27, an organizer of the San Jose event.

Both events are considered a prelude to today's march in San Francisco, which begins at 1 p.m. at Justin Hermann Plaza on Market Street and ends at Civic Center Plaza. The event is the third in a series of massive demonstrations in the city against the war.

The San Jose rally is evidence that the anti-war movement is expanding from the usual hot spots of dissent. An estimated 350 protest rallies were held Saturday in places that have not held protests since the Vietnam War -- if ever -- such as Fresno; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Spencer, W.Va.; Wilmington, N.C.; Watertown, N.Y.; St. Augustine, Fla.; Bisbee, Ariz.; Hilo, Hawaii; Sitka, Alaska; Fargo, N.D.; and Reno.

The San Jose turnout was as deeply diverse as the city, with many of the estimated 3,000 marchers from the Latino, Asian, black and Middle Eastern communities. As they marched down Santa Clara Street, Unitarians joined Methodists; Jews walked with Palestinians. The Sierra Club turned out; so did members of Local 393 of the Plumbers, Steamfitters and Refrigeration Fitters Union.

"San Jo! Say No!" proclaimed one placard. "The South Bay Says No To War," said another.

### Multicultural milieu

Under cool, cloudy skies, the peaceful crowd converged at Plaza de Cesar Chavez to hear speeches and music. Some members of racial and ethnic minorities, which are disproportionately represented in the U.S. military, worried that their sons and daughters would die overseas.

"A lot of young people are unemployed right now, so they're joining the military for job security," said Jayadev, an Indo-American. "But young people have been left out of the conversation on the issue of war. So we're here today to demand our seat at the table."

United Farm Workers activist Dolores Huerta told the crowd: "This is a test of our democracy. Is war what the people want -- or what the president wants? He works for us."

Members of the black clergy, such as the Rev. John Farris of St. James AME Church and the Rev. Elizabeth Eckford of the Church of God in Christ, denounced war.

Helal Omeira, 28, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said, "We're talking about human lives. The president needs to tell us why we're doing it."

Gary Jio, 48, of San Jose, a Japanese-American, came to the rally to voice concern for the civil rights of Muslims being held by the U.S. government. "Japanese were the target of prejudice during World War II.

machine being held by the U.S. government. "Japanese were the target of prejudice during World War II, the way Islamics are now," he said. "They are being detained without due process."

Retired plumber Fred Hirsch, 69, vice president of the plumbers union local, said, "There are two madmen: Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush. . . . One way to stop them is to unify in the streets."

Along with many families attending the San Jose rally were elected officials like Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose, who read a statement she shared with Democratic Rep. Mike Honda of San Jose, asserting that "we believe this war can still be avoided."

Santa Clara County Supervisor Blanca Alvarado said, "Mr. Bush, no war, not in our name. We want our tax dollars to be used for our people, our needs."

In Santa Cruz, whose city council was the first in the nation to oppose the war in Iraq and where the crowd was estimated to be about 5,000, the march quickly took on the ambience of a street fair, as people walked from the county building to Mission Plaza Park, then spilled into nearby streets.

Rainbow people in dreadlocks, dressed in peasant dresses and tie-dyed shirts, danced and pranced. Kids blew bubbles. Bongo players created a cacophony of sound competing with the professional musicians on stage.

### Signs bash Bush

The demonstration also had a touch of Paris, where anti-war demonstrators have carried signs comparing President Bush to Adolf Hitler. Some protesters carried large posters of Bush with a Hitler mustache and a swastika on his forehead.

One Santa Cruz teacher wore a sign around his neck that said, "Somewhere in Texas a village is missing it's idiot." Another protester's sign proclaimed, "Bush is proof that empty warheads can be dangerous."

But most of the signs were kinder and gentler. Hundreds carried peace signs, many in red, white and blue. Others wore buttons saying "Peace is Patriotic," distributed by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Elana Sifry and her husband, John Seals, brought along their 22-month-old daughter, Netta, who wore a speckled garland around her head.

"Maybe there's a slim chance our leaders will take notice and stop these moronic actions," said Seals, 32, a music teacher from Watsonville. "These demonstrations are happening in a lot more places than Santa Cruz."

Arturo Ruelas, 24, of Barrios Unidos, a group that works to stop gang warfare, said the money spent on a war with Iraq could better be spent on social services and education.

"It's about peace," he said. "It's all part of the same movement."

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